

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SEOUL 7035

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, MASS, KS, US
SUBJECT: TROOP WITHDRAWAL: COMPENSATORY MEASURES - STAFFDEL VISIT

REF: SEOUL 6930

SUMMARY: MAIN QUESTIONS RAISED IN KOREA BY SENATE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE SUBCOMMITTEE STAFFDEL, BECKINGTON AND BINNENDIJK (B&B), CONCERNED MILITARY STRENGTH IMBALANCE (PARTICULARLY IN ARMOR) FAVORING NORTH KOREA; WHETHER ADMINISTRATION POLICY WOULD PROVIDE FOR REVIEW OF MILITARY BALANCE IN KOREA BEFORE IMPLEMENTING SECOND STAGE OF WITHDRAWAL; WHETHER ROK'S COULD ASSUME SECOND DIVISION'S ROLE; AND POSSIBILITY OF OF SUBSTITUTING FMS FOR 8TH ARMY COMPENSATORY EQUIPMENT GRANT IN VIEW OF STRENGTH OF KOREAN ECONOMY AND ROK FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES. END SUMMARY

1. EFFECT ON COMBAT CAPABILITY

DURING THEIR EIGHT DAY VISIT TO KOREA, BECKINGTON AND BINNENDIJK SAW A WIDE RANGE OF KOREAN LEADERS RANGING FROM STEPHEN CARDINAL KIM TO THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. THEY ALSO SAW EMBASSY AND U.S. MILITARY OFFICERS. STAFFDEL REFERRED TO CIA BRIEFINGS IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBASSY AND UNC AND CONCENTRATED THEIR QUESTIONS ON ALLEGATION THAT THE SECRET

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NORTH IN THE PAST 18 MONTHS HAD SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED ITS OFFENSIVE MILITARY CAPABILITY. QUESTIONS ALSO FOCUSED ON WARNING TIME REQUIRED (ANSWER: "A MINIMUM OF SIX TO TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, AND WE MAY HAVE TO FIGHT FOR THAT. IF WE HAVE 48 HOURS WE CAN PREVENT A WAR"). ANOTHER QUESTION WAS: WHAT THE GREATEST OBSTACLE WAS TO ADEQUATE WARNING AND RESPONSE (ANSWER: "BEING ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF AN IMPENDING AT-

TACK AND HAVING THE COURAGE TO DECIDE TO ORDER THE NECESSARY COUNTERMEASURES PROMPTLY"). STAFFDEL ALSO ASKED FOR EXPLANATION OF DISCREPANCY BETWEEN TIME WHEN GROUND WAR WOULD BE MOST INTENSE AND FATE OF SEOUL, WITH 50 PERCENT OF KOREA'S GNP, WOULD BE DECIDED (FIRST TWO DAYS OF WAR), AND TIME WHEN AIR FORCE WOULD BE ABLE TO BRING FULL STRENGTH TO BEAR AND FOCUS ON CLOSE AIR SUPPORT TO GROUND FORCES. (ANSWER: "CLOSE AIR SUPPORT WOULD BEGIN IMMEDIATELY BUT COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY DEGRADED BY COUNTER AIR SORTIES REQUIRED TO FEND OFF NORTH KOREAN AIRSTRIKES OR IF WARNING TIME OR ABSENCE OF DECISION DID NOT PERMIT TIMELY MOVEMENT OF AIR FORCES IN WEST PAC. REGION TO KOREA. SIGNIFICANT TACTICAL AIR BUILDUP -- B-52'S ET. AL -- WOULD OCCUR WITHIN TWO DAYS OF ORDERS TO COMMENCE"). STAFFDEL ALSO ASKED ABOUT OFFENSIVE POSTURE OF NORTH KOREA -- RECENT STRENGTH INCREASES, HOW MANY DIVISIONS ON FRONT LINE. (ANSWER: "HANGARS, ARTILLERY AND KEY INDUSTRIAL SITES UNDERGROUND. TANK FORCE DOUBLED IN PAST TWO YEARS, AIR FORCES BASED WELL BACK, BUT WITH CAPABILITY TO DEPLOY FORWARD SELECTIVELY, BUT NOT MASSIVELY, WITHOUT DETECTION").

2. IMPLEMENTING WITHDRAWAL

USING FORMULA WHICH DIVIDED U.S. GROUND FORCES ROLE INTO THREE FUNCTIONS: WAR FIGHTING, DETERRENCE AND TRUCE KEEPING, STAFFDEL QUESTIONED WHETHER DETERRENCE AND TRUCE KEEPING HAD BEEN GIVEN SECRET

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SAME EMPHASIS AS WAR FIGHTING ROLE IN DECIDING TO REMOVE THE GROUND COMBAT FORCES. STAFFDEL ALSO ASKED BOTH KOREANS AND AMERICANS WHETHER ROK WOULD BE ABLE TO PERFORM ALL THREE ROLES WITH COMPENSATORY PACKAGE. (ANSWER: "LOSS OF SECOND DIVISION IS PRIMARILY PSYCHOLGICAL PROBLEM, THOUGH MILITARY ASPECT ALSO IMPORTANT. KOREANS SAID ROK FEELS THERE WAS NO REAL CONSULTATION AND THAT THERE SHOULD BE SOME EXPLICIT STATEMENT BY THE USG TO THE EFFECT THAT SECOND STAGE OF WITHDRAWAL WILL NOT PROCEED IF MILITARY SITUATION IN KOREA NOT PROPITIOUS). STAFFDEL ALSO FREQUENTLY ASKED KOREANS AND AMERICANS AT WHAT STAGE OF DECISION-MAKING PROCESS THEY HAD BECOME INVOLVED AND WHETHER KOREANS FOUND RATIONALE FOR WITHDRAWAL PERSUASIVE. KOREANS USUALLY SAID THAT THE RATIONALE DID NOT MAKE SENSE, BUT THAT ROKG HAD NO WAY TO OPPOSE IT. FROM VARIOUS SOURCES, B & B OBTAINED FULL UNDERSTANDING OF POSSIBLE COMPENSATORY MEASURES, INCLUDING FIP SUPPORT, 8TH ARMY EQUIPMENT, ADDITIONAL FMS AND WRM.

3. 8TH ARMY EQUIPMENT

STAFFDEL CITED \$3.5 BILLION ROK FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES AND 10 - 12 PERCENT REAL GNP GROWTH RATE DURING OIL CRISIS IN

ASKING WHY 8TH ARMY EQUIPMENT TURNOVER COULD NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED AS WELL BY FMS. ECONOMIC PLANNING MINISTER'S REPLY REPORTED REFTEL. MND CITED PSYCHIC DAMAGE ROK'S HAD SUFFERED WHEN MODERNIZATION PLAN HAD BEEN WATERED DOWN BY RE-COMPUTATION OF EQUIPMENT VALUE LEAVING ROK'S WITH ONLY HALF THE EQUIPMENT THEY HAD EXPECTED TO GET. THEY ALSO POINTED OUT THAT 8TH ARMY EQUIPMENT HAD SYMBOLIC VALUE, SINCE ITS PRESENCE IN KOREA WAS REGARDED BY PUBLIC AS PRIMA FACIE EVIDENCE OF ITS UTILITY FOR DEFENSE OF ROK.

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4. HUMAN RIGHTS

STAFFDEL QUERIED VARIOUS KOREANS INVOLVED IN HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT ABOUT TREND OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION. RESPONSE WAS GENERALLY THAT BLATANT VIOLATIONS HAVE CREASED, BUT FREEDOM TO EXERCISE RIGHTS NOT CHANGED. STEPHEN CARDINAL KIM AGREED THAT INCIDENTS OF TORTURE AND FORMAL ARREST HAD DROPPED OFF SIGNIFICANTLY, BUT HE THOUGHT DEGREE OF ROKG CONTROL HAD INCREASED. SOME HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MOST KOREANS WERE PREPARED TO ENDURE RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL FREEDOMS BECAUSE OF NORTH KOREAN THREAT, AND IN FACT DID NOT FIND RESTRICTIONS BURDENOME. KOREAN NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES SECRETARY GENERAL KIM KWAN-SUK TOLD STAFFDEL THAT WHILE HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES WANTED U.S. TO USE ITS "LEVERAGE" WITH PAK GOVERNMENT TO ENCOURAGE HUMAN RIGHTS, THEY DID NOT WANT U.S. TO ACTUALLY WITHHOLD MILITARY ASSISTANCE. HE SAID CHRISTIAN DELEGATION WOULD GO TO U.S. THIS FALL TO MAKE THIS POINT TO U.S. CHRISTIANS.

5. CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS

IN CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE, BECKINGTON EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT

TIMING OF SUBMISSION OF COMPENSATORY PACKAGE TO CONGRESS. HE
NOTED THAT PANAMA TREATY AND CHINA POLICY ALSO LIKELY TO BE
ON CONGRESSIONAL AGENDA AND THAT SENATE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE
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SUBCOMMITTEE WOULD BE CONSIDERING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES
LIKE C-130'S FOR EGYPT AND AWACS FOR IRAN. BECKINGTON
ALSO HINTED EMBASSY OFFICIALS MIGHT BE CALLED TO WASHINGTON
FROM SEOUL TO TESTIFY CONCERNING TROOP WITHDRAWAL AND RELATED
ISSUES.
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